

REMARKS

Claims 1-10 and 13-15 are currently pending in the present application. Claims 11 and 12 have previously been cancelled without prejudice. Amendments have been made to the claims for clarity and to remove the reference numbers. Claim 1 has been amended to clarify that the return wheel is arranged at a periphery of the partition plate and rotates with the partition plate about the first axle. Claims 1 and 8 have been amended to clarify that the wheel part is turnable independently of the partition plate. New claims 13-15 have been added. Support for the amendments and the newly added claims may be found in the originally filed claims and on page 6, lines 16-17 and page 7, line 2. No new matter has been added.

Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

I. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

A. Vinding Reference

Claims 1-10 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 (b) as being anticipated by Vinding (U.S. 7,104,491).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claims 1-10 as being anticipated by Vinding based on the traversals discussed below.

Applicants' claim 1 requires an apparatus including an axle part, a partition plate and a wheel part. The partition plate and the wheel part are independently turnable with respect to each other and about the same first axle. Claim 1 also requires a return wheel arranged at a periphery of the partition plate. Claim 8 is a method claim wherein the partition plate and the wheel part are independently turnable with respect to each other. Further, a first length of tubing is wrapped about the axle part and a second length of tubing is wrapped around the wheel part. The first length of tubing is conveyed around the return wheel. Claim 13 requires that the partition plate and the wheel part are independently turnable with respect to each other and about the same first axle. Claim 13 further requires a recess at a periphery of the partition plate that receives a portion of tubing passing therethrough to the wheel part. The claimed

apparatus and method allow that the entire length of the tubing may be unwound by pulling either end part of the tubing.

Vinding is directed to a housing having a pair of rotatable wheels for supporting two independent flexible tubings, one on each wheel. One end of each tubing is coupled to a rotatable coupler within the housing so that gas may flow between the two flexible tubings. (Abstract.) In operation, the apparatus supporting flexible tube 14 and the apparatus supporting flexible tube 16 operates in an identical fashion in complete independence one from another. (Col. 6, line 65-Col. 7, line 1.) The two apparatuses are coupled by a rotatable coupler 85. (Col. 6, lines 2-4.) In one apparatus, a wheel 70 is rotatably supported upon shaft 72. A lever winder mechanism 86 is supported in the housing 11 near aperture 13 by a worm shaft 87. Worm shaft 87 further supports a sleeve 88 upon which a feeder 89 is movably supported. A pulley 90 is secured to and rotatable with worm shaft 87. (Col. 6, lines 22-24 and 34-40.) Vinding does not teach or suggest a partition plate and a wheel part that are independently rotatable with respect to each other and rotatable about the same first axis. Vinding further does not teach or suggest a return wheel at a periphery of the partition plate.

In contrast, Applicants' claims 1 and 8 require a partition plate and a wheel part that are independently rotatable with respect to each other. Claims 1 and 8 also require that the partition plate and a wheel part be rotatable about the same first axis. Claims 1 and 8 further require that the partition plate include a return wheel at a periphery thereof. Vinding fails to teach or suggest these elements in Applicants' claim 1 and claim 8.

Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 1-10 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) be withdrawn.

B. Skowronski et al. Reference

Claims 1-10 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 (b) as being anticipated by Skowronski (U.S. 6,019,304).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claims 1-10 as being anticipated by Skowronski based on the traversals discussed below.

Skowronski is directed to a retractable reel assembly having a housing, a spool disposed in the housing and journaled for rotation about an axis, a spring operatively associated with the spool to urge the spool to rotate in a cable retracting direction, and a ratchet mechanism. (Col. 2, lines 39-43.) The ratchet mechanism controls retraction of the cable into the cable storage chamber by selectively preventing rotation of the spool relative to the housing. (Col. 2, lines 46-49.) The housing has a spindle on opposite sides thereof along the axis and the spool is journaled for rotation on the spindle. The spool has first, second and third axially spaced radial walls defining the cable storage chamber between the first and second radial walls and the cable expansion chamber between the second and third radial walls. (Col. 3, lines 47-51.) The ratchet plate taught by Skowronski is defined on the surface of the radial wall that faces the housing second side wall. (Col. 3, lines 60-62.) Skowronski fails to teach or suggest a partition plate and a wheel part that are independently rotatable with respect to each other. Vinding further does not teach or suggest a return wheel at a periphery of the partition plate.

In contrast, Applicants' claims 1 and 8 require a partition plate and a wheel part that are independently rotatable with respect to each other. Claims 1 and 8 also require a return wheel at a periphery of the partition plate. Skowronski clearly fails to teach or suggest these claimed elements of claims 1 and 8.

Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 1-10 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) be withdrawn.

II. SUMMARY

Having carefully addressed all the rejections of the Examiner in the May 16, 2008 Office Action, it is respectfully asserted that the claims properly define the invention and that the invention is both novel and non-obvious. Allowance of the present claims is earnestly solicited.

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner call the undersigned with any questions regarding this response to expedite the prosecution of the application.

Respectfully submitted,



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